

CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A material handling vehicle, comprising:
 - an operator compartment;
 - a first operator control handle for selecting a direction and a speed of travel, the first control handle being mounted at a first position in the operator compartment and configured for operation in a first operator orientation;
 - a second operator control handle for selecting a direction and a speed of travel, the second operator control handle being mounted at a second position in the compartment and configured for operation in a second operator orientation; and
 - a traction system controlled by the first and second operator control handles to drive the vehicle in a selected direction, wherein an operator can control the traction system while in either of the first or the second operator orientations.
2. The material handling vehicle as defined in claim 1, wherein the first operator control handle is a multi-function control handle.
3. The material handling vehicle as defined in claim 1, wherein the second operator control handle is substantially horizontal.
4. The material handling vehicle as defined in claim 1, wherein the second operator control is a twist grip control.

5. The material handling vehicle as defined in claim 1, further comprising a floor in the compartment, and a deadman switch mounted to the floor in a position accessible by an operator operating either the first control handle or the second control handle.
6. The material handling vehicle as defined in claim 1, wherein the first position is a first end of the operator compartment and the second position is a second end of the operator compartment.
7. The material handling vehicle as defined in claim 1, further comprising a mechanical linkage coupling the first and the second control handles.
8. The material handling vehicle as defined in claim 1, wherein the first operator control handle is a multi-function operator control handle, including a portion which is substantially horizontal, and wherein the substantially horizontal portion is rotated to select the direction and speed of travel of the material handling vehicle.
9. The material handling vehicle as defined in claim 1, wherein the first operator orientation is facing fore in the material handling vehicle and the second operator orientation is facing aft in the material handling vehicle.
10. A material handling vehicle comprising:
 - a first control handle mounted for access by an operator facing a first direction, the first control handle being rotational in the first direction to produce a control signal selecting motion in the first direction;

a second control handle mounted for access by an operator facing a second direction, the second control handle being rotational in the second direction to produce a control signal selecting motion in the second direction; and

a traction system for receiving the control signals and for producing a selected direction and a speed of travel of the material handling vehicle.

11. The material handling vehicle as defined in claim 10, wherein the first and second control handles are each rotational around a substantially horizontal axis.

12. The material handling vehicle as defined in claim 10, wherein each of the first and second control handles are rotational in the second and first directions, respectively, to provide a control signal indicative of motion in the direction opposite the direction the operator is facing.

13. The material handling vehicle as defined in claim 10, further comprising a plurality of forks and wherein the first direction is the forks first direction.

14. The material handling vehicle as defined in claim 10, wherein the second control handle is a twist grip control handle.

15. A lift truck, comprising:

a fork;

an operator station from which the operator drives the lift truck, the operator station being at least partially surrounded by an enclosure;

a steering mechanism mounted for access on the enclosure, the steering mechanism being controlled by the operator to select a direction of motion;

a first operator control mounted for access on the enclosure, the first operator control being provided adjacent the fork and configured for an operator facing the forks to select a direction of travel;

a second operator control mounted for access on the enclosure, the second operator control being provided near an end of the compartment opposite the forks and configured for an operator facing the end of the lift truck opposite the forks to select a direction of travel;
and

a traction system connected to at least one of the first and second control handles to receive the control signal indicative of a direction of travel.

16. The lift truck as defined in claim 15, wherein the first control handle includes a horizontal section which is rotated to provide a speed and a direction signal to the traction system.

17. The lift truck as defined in claim 15, wherein the first control handle is mounted in the operator control compartment for access during fore stance operation.

18. The lift truck as defined in claim 15, wherein the second control handle is mounted in the operator compartment for access during aft stance operation.

19. The lift truck as defined in claim 15, wherein the steering mechanism is mounted in the operator compartment for access during each of a fore stance operation and an aft stance operation.

20. The lift truck as defined in claim 15, further comprising a floor switch, the floor switch being positioned in a floor of the operator compartment in a location selected to be accessible by a foot of the operator operating either the first control handle or the second control handle.

21. The lift truck as defined in claim 15, further comprising a steering wheel, the steering wheel being mounted to the operator compartment in a location selected to be accessible by an operator operating either the first control handle or the second control handle.

22. The lift truck as defined in claim 15, wherein the first control handle is mounted in the operator compartment for access during fore or aft stance operation.

23. The lift truck as defined in claim 15, wherein the second control handle is mounted in the operator compartment for access during aft stance operation.